



New hardware can be purchased. New buildings can be built. New employees can be hired. But the data that was stored on the old equipment cannot be bought at any price.

It is recognized that business continuity planning and disaster recovery planning are vital activities for the day to day functions and survival mode of your business during an interruption to your business operation. The creation of your business continuity and disaster recovery plan needs to be well documented and cover:

1. People
2. Data and systems
3. Right policies and processes
4. Proper funding

To plan effectively and to run critical applications and the associated processes to shift efficiently in the event of a technical, natural or human-caused disaster, you need to first assess your mission-critical business process related applications with the right personnel and develop well-documented inventories of all critical applications. This is essential for you to create the full disaster recovery plan for your organization.

1. Buy-in from the Executives

Management awareness is the first and most important step in creating a successful plan for your organization. This is a very complex task and will take time, resources and money. In addition, each of your business units will have to contribute the necessary means and the time to work with your disaster recovery plan to have a seamless transition during a disaster event.

2. Business Impact Analysis - BIA

The first step in your business continuity process is to consider the potential impacts of each type of disaster or event. This is extremely critical – you need to be aware of these conditions so that your team can have a proper plan for a disaster under the different scenarios. During this process, several key elements need to be discovered, such as:

Assess the impact of a disaster on your business from both a financial and physical (infrastructure) perspective by asking the following questions:

- How many of our resources could be lost during different scenarios of disaster events?

- What will be the total cost?
- How long and what is required to reconstruct?
- How long can your organization survive the event?
- How is revenue affected?

3. Planning and requirements

The first and most obvious thing to do is to have a plan. The overall effectiveness of the plan depends on disaster recovery plans by all other departments and business units within your organization.

Your plan needs to have appropriate procedures, documents, vendor lists, and approval processes with the right funding, or your recovery process could be hampered by delays.

During this segment, all of your recovery requirements need to be developed. This will be critical for you and your team to have, and will be used as a basis for recovery strategies.

The plan should incorporate and identify people, processes, and funding required to support your disaster recovery processes. This plan should cover the following elements:

- (a) Hardware (mainframe, data and voice communications and personal computers)
- (b) Software (vendor supplied, in-house developed, etc.)
- (c) Documentation (DP, user, procedures)
- (d) Outside support (public networks, DP services, etc.)
- (e) Facilities (office space, office equipment, etc.)
- (f) Personnel for each business unit

Your recovery strategies need to be based on short term, intermediate term and long term outages.

4. Testing and Maintenance Program

Your organization can have a disaster recovery plan that looks great on paper. However if it is untested and technically unproven, the plan will fail in a real event.

Your DR plan needs to be tested. Your testing strategies should be tailored to the environment, and an on-going testing program should be established. Your network is growing, and your e-partners are changing. Your plan needs to be evaluated and tested to handle an actual recovery.

Your plan must reflect changes to the environment(s) that are supported by the plans. It is critical that existing change management processes are revised to take recovery plan maintenance into account.

5. Summary

The most important objective of your organization's recovery planning is to enable your company to survive a disaster and to continue normal day to day business operations.

In order to survive, you must assure that critical operations of your business can resume/continue normal processing. Throughout this effort, your team needs to establish clear lines of authority and prioritized work efforts.

The business goals and objectives for your contingency plan should be to:

- (a) Provide for the safety and well-being of people
- (b) Continue critical business operations
- (c) Minimize disruption
- (d) Minimize damage and losses
- (e) Establish management succession and emergency authority
- (f) Facilitate effective coordination of recovery tasks
- (g) Reduce the complexity of the recovery effort

We know that the probability of a major disaster to your organization is remote. But the consequences of an occurrence could be catastrophic, both in terms of operational impact and public image.

Your team should know the implications of a catastrophic event. Therefore, your entity should assign ongoing responsibility for recovery planning to an employee dedicated to this essential service.